

There was a man who made a living selling balloons at a fair. He had all colors of balloons, including red, yellow, blue, and green. Whenever business was slow, he would release a helium-filled balloon into the air and when the children saw it go up, they all wanted to buy one. They would come up to him, buy a balloon, and his sales would go up again. He continued this process all day. One day, he felt someone tugging at his jacket. He turned around and saw a little boy who asked, "If you release a black balloon, would that also fly?" Moved by the boy's concern, the man replied with empathy, "Son, it is not the color of the balloon, it is what is inside that makes it go up."

The same thing applies to our lives. It is what is inside that counts. The thing inside of us that makes us go up is our attitude.

Have you ever wondered why some individuals, organizations, or countries are more successful than others?

It is not a secret. These people simply think and act more effectively. They have learned how to do so by investing in the most valuable asset—*people*. I believe that the success of an individual, organization or country, depends on the quality of their people.

I have spoken to executives in major corporations all over the world and asked one question: "If you had a magic wand and there was one thing you would want changed, that would give you a cutting edge in the marketplace resulting in increased productivity and profits, what would that be?" The answer was unanimous. They all said that if people had better attitudes, they'd be better teamplayers, and it'd cut down waste, improve loyalty and, in general, make their company a great place to work.

William James of Harvard University said, "The greatest

discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind."

Experience has shown that human resources is the most valuable asset of any business. It is more valuable than capital or equipment. Unfortunately, it is also the most wasted. *People can be your biggest asset or your biggest liability.*

TQP—TOTAL QUALITY PEOPLE

Having been exposed to a number of training programs, such as customer service, selling skills, and strategic planning, I have come to the conclusion that all these are great programs with one major challenge: None of them works unless they have the right foundation, and the right foundation is TQP. What is TQP? TQP is Total Quality People—people with character, integrity, good values, and a positive attitude.

Don't get me wrong. You do need all the other programs, but they will only work when you have the right foundation, and the foundation is TQP. For example, some customer service programs teach participants to say "please," and "thank-you," give smiles and handshakes. But how long can a person keep on a fake smile if he does not have the desire to serve? Besides, people can see through him. And if the smile is not sincere, it is irritating. My point is, there has to be substance over form, not form over substance. Without a doubt, one does need to remember "please" and "thank-you," the smiles, etc.—they are very important. But keep in mind that they come a lot easier when accompanied by a desire to serve.

Someone once approached Blaise Pascal, the famous French philosopher and said, "If I had your brains, I would be a better person." Pascal replied, "Be a better person and you will have my brains."

The Calgary Tower stands at 190.8 meters. The total weight of the tower is 10,884 tons, of which 6,349 tons is below ground (approximately 60%). This shows that some of the greatest buildings have the strongest foundations. Just like a great building stands on a strong foundation, so does success. And the foundation of success is attitude.

YOUR ATTITUDE CONTRIBUTES TO SUCCESS

A study attributed to Harvard University found that when a person gets a job, 85% of the time it is because of their attitude, and only 15% of the time because of how smart they are and how many facts and figures they know. Surprisingly, almost 100% of education dollars go to teach facts and figures which account for only 15% of success in work!

This book is all about that 85% of success. *Attitude* is the most important word in the English language. It applies to every sphere of life, including one's personal and professional life. Can an executive be a good executive without a good attitude? Can a student be a good student without a good attitude? Can a parent, teacher, salesman, employer, employee be good in their roles without a good attitude?

The foundation of success regardless of your chosen field, is *attitude*.

If attitude is such a critical factor in success, shouldn't you examine your attitude toward life and ask how your attitude will affect your goals?



ACRES OF DIAMONDS

There was a farmer in Africa who was happy and content. He was happy because he was content. He was content because he was

happy. One day a wise man came to him and told him the glory of diamonds and the power that goes along with them. The wise man said, "If you had a diamond the size of your thumb, you could have your own city. If you had a diamond the size of your fist, you could probably own your own country." And then he went away. That night the farmer couldn't sleep. He was unhappy and he was discontent. He was unhappy because he was discontent and discontent because he was unhappy.

The next morning he made arrangements to sell off his farm, took care of his family and went in search of diamonds. He looked all over Africa and couldn't find any. He looked all through Europe and couldn't find any. When he got to Spain, he was emotionally, physically and financially broke. He got so disheartened that he threw himself into the Barcelona River and committed suicide.

Back home, the person who had bought his farm was watering the camels at a stream that ran through the farm. Across the stream, the rays of the morning sun hit a stone and made it sparkle like a rainbow. He thought it would look good on the mantelpiece. He picked up the stone and put it in the living room. That afternoon the wise man came and saw the stone sparkling. He asked, "Is Hafiz back?" The new owner said, "No, why do you ask?" The wise man said, "Because that is a diamond. I recognize one when I see one." The man said, "No, that's just a stone I picked up from the stream. Come, I'll show you. There are many more." They went and picked some samples and sent them for analysis. Sure enough, the stones were diamonds. They found that the farm was indeed covered with acres and acres of diamonds.*

What is the moral of this story?

There are five morals:

1. When our attitude is right, we realize that we are all walking on acres and acres of diamonds.

*Attributed to Dr. Russel Conwell.

Opportunity is always under our feet. We don't have to go anywhere. All we need to do is recognize it.

2. The grass on the other side always looks greener.
3. While we are eyeing the grass on the other side, there are others who are eyeing the grass on our side. They would be happy to trade places with us.
4. When people don't know how to recognize opportunity, they complain of noise when it knocks.
5. The same opportunity never knocks twice. The next one may be better or worse, but it is never the same one.



DAVID AND GOLIATH

We all know the story of David and Goliath. There was a giant who was bullying and harassing the children in the village. One day, a 17-year-old shepherd boy came to visit his brothers and asked, "Why don't you stand up and fight the giant?" The brothers were terrified and they replied, "Don't you see he is too big to hit?" But David said, "No, he is not too big to hit, he is too big to miss." The rest is history. We all know what happened. David killed the giant with a sling. Same giant, different perception.

Our attitude determines how we look at a setback. To a positive thinker, it can be a stepping stone to success. To a negative thinker, it can be a stumbling block.

Great organizations are not measured by wages and working conditions, they are measured by feelings, attitudes and relationships.

When employees say, "I can't do it," there are two possible meanings. Are they saying they don't know how to or they don't want to? If they don't know how to, that is a training issue. If they are saying they don't want to,

it may be an attitude issue (they don't care) or a values issue (they believe they should not do it).

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

I believe in the holistic approach. We are not an arm and a leg, but a complete human being. The whole person goes to work and the whole person comes home. We take family problems to work and work problems to the family. What happens when we take family problems to work? Our stress level goes up and productivity comes down. Similarly, work and social problems have an impact on every aspect of our lives.

Take any one of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or your work or your government or your world and it holds true and clear and firm.

FACTORS THAT DETERMINE OUR ATTITUDE

Are we born with attitudes or do we develop them as we mature? What are the factors that form our attitudes?

If you have a negative outlook on life because of your environment, can you change your attitude? Most of our attitude is shaped during our formative years.

There are primarily three factors that determine our attitude. They are:

1. environment
2. experience
3. education

These are called the triple Es of attitude. Let's evaluate each of the factors individually.

1. Environment

Environment consists of the following:

- Home: positive or negative influences
- School: peer pressure
- Work: supportive or over-critical supervisor
- Media: television, newspapers, magazines, radio, movies
- Cultural background
- Religious background
- Traditions and beliefs
- Social environment
- Political environment

All of these environments create a culture. Every place—be it a home, organization or a country—has a culture.

Have you noticed that sometimes you go to a store and you find the salesperson polite, the supervisor, manager and owner polite as well? Yet you go to another shop and you find everyone rude and discourteous.

You go to a home and you find the kids and parents well-behaved, courteous and considerate. You go to another home where everyone is fighting like cats and dogs.

In countries where the government and political environment is honest, generally you will find that the people are honest, law abiding and helpful. And the reverse is true too. In a corrupt environment, an honest person has a tough time. Whereas in an honest environment, the corrupt one has a tough time.

In a positive environment, a marginal performer's output goes up. In a negative environment, a good performer's output goes down..

Culture in any place always goes top down, never bottom up. We need to step back and look at what kind of environment we have created for ourselves and those

around us. It is tough to expect positive behavior in a negative environment. Where lawlessness becomes the law, honest citizens become cheats, crooks and thieves.

Isn't it time to evaluate the environment that we are in or we have created for others?

2. Experiences

Our behavior changes according to our experiences with people and events in our life. If we have a positive experience with a person, our attitude toward him becomes positive and vice versa.

3. Education

I refer to both formal and informal education, not just academic qualifications. Knowledge strategically applied translates into wisdom, ensuring success. I talk of education in the broader sense. It makes the role of the educator vital. A teacher affects eternity. The ripple effect is immeasurable.

We are drowning in information but starving for knowledge and wisdom. Education ought to teach us not only how to make a living but also how to live.

HOW DO YOU RECOGNIZE PEOPLE WITH A POSITIVE ATTITUDE?

Just like an absence of ill health does not equal good health, an absence of negativity alone does not make a person positive.

People with positive attitudes have certain personality traits that are easy to recognize. They are caring, confident, patient, and humble. They have high expectations of themselves and others. They anticipate positive outcomes.

A person with a positive attitude is like a fruit of all seasons. He is always welcome.

THE BENEFITS OF A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

These are many and easy to see. But what is easy to see is also easy to miss. To mention a few, a positive attitude

- increases productivity
- fosters teamwork
- solves problems
- improves quality
- makes for congenial atmosphere
- breeds loyalty
- increases profits
- fosters better relationships with employers, employees, and customers
- reduces stress
- helps a person become a contributing member of society and an asset to their country
- makes for a pleasing personality

THE CONSEQUENCES OF A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE

Our life is an obstacle course and we become our own biggest obstacle by having a negative attitude. People with a negative attitude have a hard time keeping friendships, jobs, marriage and relationships. Their attitude leads to

- bitterness
- resentment
- a purposeless life
- ill health
- high stress level for themselves and others

They create a negative environment at home and work and become a liability to society. They also pass on their negative behavior to others around them and to future generations.

WHEN WE BECOME AWARE OF OUR NEGATIVE ATTITUDE, WHY DON'T WE CHANGE?

Human nature generally resists change. Change is uncomfortable. Regardless of its positive or negative effect, change can be stressful. Sometimes we get so comfortable with our negativity that even when the change is for the positive, we don't want to accept it. We stay with the negative.

Charles Dickens wrote about a prisoner who stayed for many years in a dungeon. After serving his sentence, he got his freedom. He was brought out from his cell into the bright daylight of the open world. This man looked all around and after a few moments was so uncomfortable with his newly acquired freedom that he asked to be brought back to his cell into confinement. To him, the dungeon, the chains and the darkness were more secure and comfortable than accepting the change of freedom and the open world.

STEPS TO BUILDING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

During childhood, we form attitudes that last a lifetime. Undoubtedly, it would be a lot easier and better to have acquired a positive attitude during our formative years. Does that mean if we acquire a negative attitude, whether by design or by default, we are stuck with it? Of course not. Can we change? Yes. Is it easy? Absolutely not.

How do you build and maintain a positive attitude?

- Become aware of the principles that build a positive attitude
- Desire to be positive
- Cultivate the discipline and dedication to practice those principles

As adults, regardless of our environment, education and experience, who is responsible for our attitude?

We are: We have to accept responsibility some time in our lives. We blame everyone and everything but ourselves. It is up to us to choose our attitude every morning. As adults, we need to accept responsibility for our behavior and actions.

People with negative attitudes will blame the whole world, their parents, teachers, spouse, the economy and the government for their failures.

You have to get away from the past. Dust yourself off, get back into the mainstream. Put your dreams together and move forward. Thinking of the positive things that are true, honest and good, will put us in a positive state of mind.

If we want to build and maintain a positive attitude, we need to consciously practice the following steps:

Step 1: Change Focus, Look for the Positive

We need to become good finders. We need to focus on the positive in life. Let's start looking for what is right in a person or situation instead of looking for what is wrong. Because of our conditioning, we are so attuned to finding fault and looking for what is wrong that we forget to see the positive picture.

Even in paradise, fault finders will find faults. Most people find what they are looking for. If they are looking for friendship, happiness and the positive, that is what

they get. If they are looking for fights or indifference, then that is what they get. Caution—looking for the positive does not mean overlooking faults.



LOOKING FOR THE GOLD

As a young Scots boy, Andrew Carnegie came to America and started doing odd jobs. He ended up as one of the largest steel manufacturers in the United States.

At one time he had 43 millionaires working for him. Several decades ago, a million dollars used to be a lot of money; even today it is a lot of money. Someone asked Mr. Carnegie how he dealt with people? Andrew Carnegie replied, "Dealing with people is like digging gold: When you go digging for an ounce of gold, you have to move tons of dirt to get an ounce of gold. But when you go digging, you don't go looking for the dirt, you go looking for the gold."

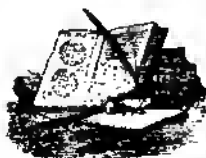
What is your focus? Become a digger for gold. If you are looking for what is wrong with people or with things, you will find many. What are you looking for? Andrew Carnegie's reply has a very important message. There is something positive in every person and every situation. Sometimes we have to dig deep to look for the positive because it may not be apparent. Besides, we are so used to looking for what is wrong with other people and situations, we forget to see what is right. Someone once said that even a stopped clock is right twice a day.

Remember—when you go looking for gold, you have to move tons of dirt to get to an ounce of gold. But when you go looking, you don't go looking for the dirt, you go looking for the gold.

Negative People will Always Criticize

which side you are on, they are always on the other side. They have made a career out of criticizing. They are "career critics." They criticize as if they will win a prize at a contest. They will find fault with every person and every situation. You will find people like this in every home, family, office. They go around finding fault and telling everybody how bad things are and blaming the whole world for their problems. We have a name for these people. They are called energy suckers. They will go to the cafeteria and drown themselves in 20 cups of tea and coffee and smoke to their hearts' content with one excuse: they are trying to relax. All that they are doing is causing more tension for themselves and for others around them. They spread negative messages like a plague and create an environment conducive to negative results.

Robert Fulton invented the steamboat. On the banks of the Hudson River he was displaying his new invention. The pessimists and the skeptics were gathered around to observe. They commented that it would never start. Lo and behold, it did. As it made its way down the river, the pessimists who said it would never go, started shouting that it would never stop. What an attitude!



SOME PEOPLE ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE NEGATIVE

There was a hunter who bought a bird dog, the only one of its kind in the world, that could walk on water. He couldn't believe his eyes when he saw this miracle. At the same time, he was very pleased that he could show off his new acquisition to his friends. He invited a friend to go duck hunting. After some time, they shot a few ducks and the man ordered his dog to run and fetch the birds. All day-long, the dog ran on water and kept fetching the birds. The owner was expecting a comment or a compliment about

this amazing dog, but never got one. As they were returning home, he asked his friend if he had noticed anything unusual about his dog. The friend replied, "Yes, in fact, I did notice something unusual. Your dog can't swim."

Some people always look at the negative side. Who is a pessimist? Pessimists

- are unhappy when they have no troubles to speak of
- feel bad when they feel good, for fear they will feel worse when they feel better
- spend most of their life at complaint counters
- always turn out the lights to see how dark it is
- are always looking for cracks in the mirror of life
- stop sleeping in bed when they hear that more people die in bed than anywhere else
- cannot enjoy their health because they think they may be sick tomorrow
- not only expect the worst but make the worst of whatever happens
- don't see the doughnut, only the hole
- believe that the sun shines only to cast shadows
- forget their blessings and count their troubles
- know that hard work never hurts anyone but believe "why take a chance?"

Who is an optimist? It is well described by the following:

Be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind. Talk health, happiness, and prosperity to every person you meet. Make all your friends feel there is something in them. Look at the sunny side of everything. Think only of the best, work only for the best, and expect only the best. Be as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own. Forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater

YOU CAN WIN

achievements of the future. Give everyone a smile. Spend so much time improving yourself that you have no time left to criticize others. Be too big for worry and too noble for anger.*

Step 2: Make a Habit of Doing It Now

We have all procrastinated at some time in our lives. I know I have, only to have regretted it later. Procrastination leads to a negative attitude. The habit of procrastination fatigues you more than the effort it takes to do it.

A completed task is fulfilling and energizing; an incomplete task drains energy like a leak from a tank.

If you want to build and maintain a positive attitude, get into the habit of living in the present and doing it now.

*He slept beneath the moon
He basked beneath the sun
He lived a life of going to do
and died with nothing done.*

—James Albery

When I Become a Big Boy

This is like the little boy who says when I become a big boy, I will do this and this and I will be happy. And when he becomes a big boy he says, when I finish college and do this and this and I will be happy. And when he finishes college he says when I get my first job and do this and this I will be happy. And when he gets his first job he says when I get married and do this and this and then I will be happy. And when he gets married he says when

*"Creed for Optimists" by Christian D. Larsen, in *The Best of ... Bits & Pieces*, Economics Press, Fairfield, NJ, 1994, p. 3.



the kids get out of school and I do this and this I will be happy. And when the kids get out of school, he says when I retire and do this and this, I will be happy. And when he retires what does he see? He sees life has just gone by in front of his eyes.

Some people practice procrastination by hiding behind high sounding words, saying "I'm analyzing" and six months later they are still analyzing. What they don't realize is that they are suffering from a disease called, "Paralysis of Analysis" and they will never succeed.

Then there is another breed of people who procrastinate by saying "I'm getting ready" and a month later they are still getting ready and six months later they are still getting ready. What they don't realize is they are suffering from a disease called "Excusitis." They keep making excuses.

Life is not a dress rehearsal. I don't care what philosophy you believe in—we have got only one shot at this game called life. The stakes are too high. The stakes are the future generations.

What time is it and where are we? The answer is now and we are here. Let's make the best of now and utilize the present to the fullest. The message is not that we don't need to plan for the future. The message is that we *do* need to plan for the future. If we utilize our present to its fullest, we are sowing the seeds for a better future automatically, aren't we?

If you want to build a positive attitude, learn the phrase, "do it now" and stop the habit of procrastination.

The saddest words in life are:

- "It might have been."
- "I should have."
- "I could have."
- "I wish I had."
- "If only I had given a little extra."

Never leave till tomorrow which you can do today.

—Benjamin Franklin

I am sure all winners wanted to be procrastinators but never got around to it.

When people say, "I will do it one of these days," you can be sure it means none of these days.

Some people keep waiting for all lights to turn green before they leave home. That will never happen and they fail even before they start. That is sad.

Stop procrastinating: Isn't it time that we put off putting things off?

Step 3: Develop an Attitude of Gratitude

Count your blessings, not your troubles. Take time to smell the roses. It is not uncommon to hear that someone, because of an accident or illness, became blind or paralyzed but won a million dollars in settlement. How many of us would like to trade places with that person? Not many. We are so focused on complaining about things we don't have that we lose sight of the things we have. There is a lot to be thankful for.

When I say count your blessings, not your troubles, the message is not to become complacent. If complacency was the message you got, then I would be guilty of faulty communication and you of selective listening.

To give you an example of selective listening, let me share with you a story I heard about a medical doctor who was invited as a guest speaker to address a group of alcoholics. He wanted to make a demonstration that would be powerful enough to make people realize that alcohol was injurious to their health. He had two containers, one with pure distilled water and one with pure alcohol. He put an earthworm into the distilled water

and it swam beautifully and came up to the top. He put another earthworm into the alcohol and it disintegrated in front of everyone's eyes. He wanted to prove that this was what alcohol did to the insides of our body. He asked the group what the moral of the story was and one person from behind said, "If you drink alcohol you won't have worms in your stomach." Was that the message? Of course not. That was selective listening—we hear what we want to hear and not what is being said.

Many of our blessings are hidden treasures—count your blessings and not your troubles.

Step 4: Get Into a Continuous Education Program

Let's get some myths out of the way. It is a general belief that we get educated in schools and colleges. I run seminars in many different countries and ask my audiences all the time, "Do we really get educated in schools and colleges?" Generally, there is a consensus that some do but most don't. We receive a lot of information in schools and colleges. Don't get me wrong. We do need information to be educated. But we need to know the true meaning of education.

Intellectual education influences the head and values-based education influences the heart. In fact, education that does not train the heart can be dangerous. If we want to build character in our offices, homes and society, we must achieve a minimum level of moral and ethical literacy. Education that builds fundamental traits of character—such as honesty, compassion, courage, persistence and responsibility—is absolutely essential. We don't need more academic education; we need more values education. I would stress that a person who is morally educated will be a lot better equipped to move up in life or succeed than a morally bankrupt person with excellent academic qualifications. Character building and

teaching values and ethics come in the formative years because a child is not born with this knowledge.

Education Without Values

True education is training of both the head and the heart. An uneducated thief may steal from the freight car but an educated one may steal the entire railroad.

Universities are turning out highly skilled barbarians because we don't provide a framework of values to young people, who more and more are searching for it.

—Steven Muller, President, Johns Hopkins University

We need to compete for knowledge and wisdom, not for grades. Knowledge is piling up facts, wisdom is simplifying it. One could have good grades and a degree without learning much. The most important thing one can learn is to "learn to learn." People confuse education with the ability to memorize facts. Education of the mind without morals creates a menace to society.



EDUCATION DOES NOT MEAN GOOD JUDGEMENT

There is a story about a man who sold hotdogs by the roadside. He was illiterate, so he never read newspapers. He was hard of hearing, so he never listened to the radio. His eyes were weak, so he never watched television. But enthusiastically, he sold lots of hotdogs. His sales and profit went up. He ordered more meat and got himself a bigger and a better stove. As his business was growing, the son, who had recently graduated from college, joined his father.

Then something strange happened. The son asked, "Dad, aren't you aware of the great recession that is coming our

way?" The father replied, "No, but tell me about it." The son said, "The international situation is terrible. The domestic is even worse. We should be prepared for the coming bad time." The man thought that since his son had been to college, read the papers, and listened to the radio, he ought to know and his advice should not be taken lightly. So the next day, the father cut down his order for the meat and buns, took down the sign and was no longer enthusiastic. Very soon, fewer and fewer people bothered to stop at his hotdog stand. And his sales started coming down rapidly. The father said to his son, "Son, you were right. We are in the middle of a recession. I am glad you warned me ahead of time."

What is the moral of the story?

1. Many times we confuse intelligence with good judgement.
2. A person may have high intelligence but poor judgement.
3. Choose your advisers carefully and use your judgement.
4. A person can and will be successful with or without formal education if they have the 5 Cs:
 - character
 - commitment
 - conviction
 - courtesy
 - courage
5. The tragedy is that there are many walking encyclopedias who are living failures.

Intelligence is quickness to learn. Ability is the skill to apply what is learned. Competence is the ability and the desire to apply what is learned. Desire is the attitude that makes a skillful person competent. Many skillful people are incompetent. Ability without the right attitude is wasted.

The first duty of a university is to teach wisdom, not trade; character, not technicalities.

—Winston Churchill

Educated

Whom, then, do I call educated?

First, those who manage well the circumstances which they encounter day by day; and those who can judge situations appropriately as they arise and rarely miss the suitable course of action.

Next, those who are honorable in their dealings with all men, bearing easily what is unpleasant or offensive in others, and being as reasonable with their associates as is humanly possible.

Furthermore, those who hold their pleasures always under control and are not unduly overcome by their misfortunes, bearing up under them bravely and in a manner worthy of our common nature.

Most important of all, those who are not spoiled by their successes, who do not desert their true selves, but hold their ground steadfastly as wise and sober-minded men, rejoicing no more in the good things that have come to them through chance than in those which through their own nature and intelligence are theirs since birth.

Those who have a character which is in accord, not with one of these things, but with all of them these are educated—possessed of all the virtues.

—Socrates (470–399 B.C.)

In a nutshell, educated persons are those who can choose wisely and courageously under any circumstances. If they have the ability to choose between wisdom and foolishness, between good and bad, between virtuousness

and vulgarities, regardless of the academic degrees they have, then they are educated.

An expert is someone who knows all the answers if you ask the right questions.



What is a Broad-Based Education?

Some animals in a forest decided to start a school. The students included a bird, a squirrel, a fish, a dog, a rabbit, and a mentally retarded eel. A board was formed and it was decided that flying, tree climbing, swimming, and burrowing would be part of the curriculum in order to give a broad-based education. All animals were required to take all subjects.

The bird was excellent at flying and was getting As but when it came to burrowing, it kept breaking its beak and wings and started failing. Pretty soon, it started making Cs in flying and of course in tree climbing and swimming it was getting Fs. The squirrel was great at tree climbing and was getting As, but was failing in swimming. The fish was the best swimmer but couldn't get out of the water and got Fs in everything else. The dog didn't join the school, stopped paying taxes and kept fighting with the administration to include barking as part of the curriculum. The rabbit got As in burrowing but tree climbing was a real problem. It kept falling and landing on its head, suffered brain damage, and soon couldn't even burrow properly and got Cs in that too.

The mentally retarded eel, who did everything half as well, became the valedictorian of the class. The board was happy because everybody was getting a broad-based education.

What a broad-based education really means is that the student is prepared for life, without losing their areas of specialization or competence.

We are All Gifted with Some Strengths

The small size of the hummingbird, weighing only a tenth

of an ounce, gives it the flexibility to perform complicated maneuvers, such as beating its wings 75 times a second. This enables the hummingbird to drink nectar from flowers while hovering but it cannot soar, glide or hop. The ostrich, at 300 pounds, is the largest bird but it can't fly. However, its legs are so strong that it can run at up to 50 miles per hour, taking strides of 12-15 feet.

Ignorance

Illusion of knowledge is not education, but ignorance. Foolish people have a strange kind of confidence which comes only with ignorance.

Being ignorant is not so much a shame as being unwilling to learn to do things the right way.

—Benjamin Franklin

There is nothing wrong with ignorance, but making a career out of it is stupidity. Some people accumulate ignorance and they confuse it with education. Ignorance is not bliss. It is misery, tragedy, poverty, and sickness. If ignorance were bliss, how come not more people are happy? If a little knowledge is dangerous, so is a lot of ignorance which leads to pettiness, fear, dogmatism, egotism, and prejudice. Wisdom is nothing more than dispelling ignorance.

We live in an information age. It is estimated that the amount of knowledge is doubling every year. With information so readily available, it is easy to dispel ignorance. It is sad to see that we are taught everything but the most essential things. We are taught the three Rs (reading, riting, rithmetic), but what good is intellectual education without understanding human dignity and compassion?

Schools are a fountain of knowledge: some students come to drink, some to sip and others just to gargle.

Commonsense

Education and knowledge without commonsense has little meaning. Commonsense is the ability to see things as they are and do them as they ought to be done.

We are born with five senses—touch, taste, sight, smell, and hearing. But successful people have a sixth sense—commonsense. Commonsense is gained in spite of, not necessarily as a result of, education. The best education without commonsense is worthless. An abundance of commonsense is called wisdom.



SHARPEN YOUR AXE

John, a woodcutter, worked for a company for five years but never got a raise. The company hired Bill and within a year he got a raise. This caused resentment in John and he went to his boss to talk about it. The boss said, "You are still cutting the same number of trees you were cutting five years ago. We are a result-oriented company and would be happy to give you a raise if your productivity goes up." John went back, started hitting harder and putting in longer hours but he still wasn't able to cut more trees. He went back to his boss and told him his dilemma. The boss told John to go talk to Bill. "Maybe there is something Bill knows that you and I don't." John asked Bill how he managed to cut more trees. Bill answered, "After every tree I cut, I take a break for two minutes and sharpen my axe. When was the last time you sharpened your axe?" This question hit home like a bullet and John got his answer.

My question is, when was the last time you sharpened your axe? Past glory and education don't do it. We have to continuously sharpen the axe.

Feed Your Mind

Just like our bodies need good food every day, our minds need good thoughts every day. The key words in the preceding sentence are *good* food and *good* thoughts. If we feed our body with junk food and our mind with bad thoughts, we will have both a sick body and mind. We need to feed our mind with the pure and the positive to stay on track. Through constant practice and exposure, we can learn the principles that make a person successful just like we learn to play basketball.

Knowledge is Power

We hear every day that knowledge is power. Not really. Knowledge is information. It is potential power and it becomes power only when it is acted upon.

What is the difference between a person who cannot read and a person who can but does not read? Not a whole lot.

Learning is like eating food. It is not how much you eat that matters, what counts is how much you digest.

Knowledge is potential power, wisdom is real power.

Education takes many forms, it is not just grades and a degree. It is

- cultivating your strength
- learning self-discipline
- listening
- desiring to learn

Our minds, like muscles, stretch or shrink depending on how much or how little we exercise them.

If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.

Continuous positive education leads to positive thinking.

Education is a Reservoir

Positive thinkers are like athletes who, through practice, build an inner reservoir of stamina that they draw on in competition. If they don't practice, they have nothing to draw on.

Similarly, positive thinkers regularly build a reserve of positive attitude by constantly feeding their mind on the pure, the powerful and the positive on a daily basis. They realize that we are all going to be faced with the negative and if we have the reserve of positive attitude we will be able to overcome; otherwise the negative will prevail.

Positive thinkers are not fools and they are not going through life with blinders. They are winners who *recognize their limitations*, but *focus on their strengths*. Losers, on the other hand, recognize their strengths but focus on their weaknesses.

Step 5: Build a Positive Self-Esteem

What is Self-Esteem?

Self-esteem is the way we feel about ourselves. When we feel good within, our performance goes up, our relationships improve both at home and at work. The world looks nicer. What is the reason? There is a direct correlation between feeling and behavior.

How Do We Build Positive Self-Esteem?

If you want to build positive self-esteem quickly, one of the fastest ways is to do something for others who cannot repay you in cash or kind.



A few years ago I started volunteering my time to teach attitude and self-esteem programs to jail inmates. In just a few weeks I learned more than I had learned in years.

After attending my program for two weeks, one of the inmates stopped me and said, "Shiv, I want to talk to you. I'm going to be released from prison in a couple of weeks." I asked him what he learned through the attitude development program. He thought for a while and then said that he felt good about himself. I said, "Good doesn't tell me anything. Tell me specifically what behavior has changed?" I believe that learning has not taken place unless behavior changes. He told me he read his Bible every day since I started the program. I then asked him what reading the Bible did to him. He replied that he felt comfortable with himself and others which he hadn't felt before. I said, "That is nice, but the bottom line is, what are you going to do when you leave jail?" He told me he was going to try to be a contributing member of society. Then I asked him the same question again and he gave me the same answer. For the third time I asked him the same question "What are you going to do when you leave jail?" Obviously, I was looking for a different answer. At this point, in an angry tone, he said, "I am going to be a contributing member of society." I pointed out to him that there was a world of difference in what he said then and what he said now. Earlier he had said, "I am going to try to be" and now he said "I am going to be." The difference is the word "try." He got rid of the word trying and that made sense. Either we do it or we don't. The word "trying" keeps the door open for him to come back to jail.

Another inmate, who was listening in on our conversation, asked, "Shiv, what do you get paid to do all this?" I told him that the feeling that I just experienced was worth more than all the money in the world. He then asked, "Why do you come here?" I said, "I come here for my own selfish reason, and my selfish reason is that I want to make this world a better place to live." This kind of selfishness is healthy. In a nutshell, what you put into the system, you always get back, and most times more than you can ever put in. But you don't put it in with the desire to get something back.

Another inmate said, "What anybody does is their business. When people take drugs, it is none of your business. Why don't you leave them alone?" I replied, "My friend, even though I disapprove, I will compromise and accept what you are saying—that it is none of my business. If you can guarantee that when someone takes drugs, and when they get behind the wheel of a car and have an accident, the only thing they will ever hit is a tree, I will compromise. But if you cannot guarantee that when they take drugs and have an accident, then you or your kids or I or my kids could be dead under the wheels, you better believe it is my business. I have to get this person off the road."

This one phrase, "It is my life, I will do what I want," has done more damage than good. People choose to ignore the spirit and derive the meaning that is convenient to them. Such people have tied this phrase to selfishness and I'm sure that was not the intent.

These people forget that we don't live in isolation. What you do affects me and what I do affects you. We are connected. We have to realize that we are sharing this planet and we must learn to behave responsibly.

There are two kinds of people in this world—takers and givers. Takers eat well and givers sleep well. Givers have high self-esteem, a positive attitude, and they serve society. By serving society, I do not mean a run-of-the-mill pseudo leader-turned-politician who serves himself by pretending to serve others.

As human beings, we all have the need to receive and take. But a healthy personality with high self-esteem is one that not only has its need to take but also to give.



A man was washing his new car when his neighbor asked him, "When did you get the car?" He replied "My brother gave it to me." The neighbor's response was, "I wish I had a car like that." The man replied, "You should

wish to have a brother like that." The neighbor's wife was listening to the conversation and she interrupted, "I wish I was a brother like that." What a way to go!

Step 6: Stay Away from Negative Influences

Today's teenagers learn from adult behavior and the media. They face peer pressure. Peer pressure is not just limited to teenagers, it is also prevalent in adults. It shows a lack of self-esteem when people do not have the courage to say "No, thank you," and stay away from negative influences. What are the negative influences?



1. Negative People

An eagle's egg was placed in the nest of a prairie chicken. The egg hatched and the little eagle grew up thinking it was a prairie chicken. The eagle did what the prairie chickens did. It scratched in the dirt for seeds. It clucked and cackled. It never flew more than a few feet because that is what the prairie chickens did. One day he saw an eagle flying gracefully and majestically in the open sky. He asked the prairie chickens: "What is that beautiful bird?" The chickens replied, "That is an eagle. He is an outstanding bird, but you cannot fly like him because you are just a prairie chicken." So the eagle never gave it a second thought, believing that to be the truth. He lived the life of and died a prairie chicken, depriving himself of his heritage because of his lack of vision. What a waste! He was born to win, but was conditioned to lose.

The same thing is true of most people. The unfortunate part of life is as Oliver Wendall Holmes said, "Most people go to their graves, with music still in them." We don't achieve excellence because of our own lack of vision.

If you want to soar like an eagle, you have to learn the ways of an eagle. If you associate with achievers, you will become one. If you associate with thinkers, you will become

one. If you associate with givers, you will become one. If you associate with complainers, you will become one.

Whenever people succeed in life, petty people will take cracks at them and try to pull them down. When you refuse to fight petty people, you win. In martial arts, they teach that when someone takes a crack at you, instead of blocking you should step away. Why? Even to block you require energy. Why not use it more productively? Similarly, in order to fight petty people, you have to come down to their level. This is what they want, because now you are one of them.

Don't let negative people drag you down.

Remember, a person's character is not only judged by the company he or she keeps but also by the company he or she avoids.

2. Smoking, Drugs and Alcohol

One reason that I don't drink is that I want to know when I am having a good time.

—Lady Astor

Drinking makes a person lose his inhibitions and give exhibitions.

In my travels, I have noticed that in some countries drinking has become a national pastime. If you don't drink, they look at you as if there is something wrong. Their motto is: "It doesn't matter how bad your English is, as long as your Scotch is good." If a banker asked them what their liquid assets are, they would bring two bottles of Scotch.

Drinking and smoking are glamorized today. It all starts with the first time. If you ask people why they consume alcohol or take drugs, they will give you a host of reasons,

such as: to celebrate; to have fun; to forget problems; to relax; to experiment; to impress (it is cool to drink); to be fashionable; to mingle; for business purposes.

People want to conform to peer pressure. I am amazed at the way peer pressure compels with phrases such as: "Aren't you my friend?"; "One for the road"; "One for my health."

The following poem from an unknown author explains the dilemma of a social drinker well.

*I've drunk to your
Health in taverns;
I've drunk to your
Health in my home,
I've drunk to your
Health so damn
many times,
That I've almost
ruined my own!*

Drinking and driving cost lives. According to Jerry Johnson,* the American Hospital Association reports that half of all hospital admissions are alcohol-related and according to the National Safety Council's 1989 Accident Facts Edition, a person is injured in an alcohol-related crash every 60 seconds.

3. Pornography

Pornography is nothing short of dehumanizing women and children.

*In his book *It's Killing Our Kids*, Word Publishing, p. xv.

The consequences of pornography are that it

- dehumanizes women
- victimizes children
- destroys marriages
- encourages sexual violence
- makes fun of ethical and moral values
- destroys individuals, families, and communities

A woman is raped in the United States every 46 seconds. (National Victim Center/Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, 1992). Eighty-six percent of rapists admit to regular use of pornography, with 57 percent admitting imitation of pornography scenes when committing sex crimes (Dr. William Marshall, 1988).*

It is sad to see how low some people will stoop to make a buck by making pornography their business. What about the sick people who buy it?

4. Negative Movies and Television Programs

Today's kids are learning their attitudes and values more from television and movies than from anywhere else. It is estimated that in the United States, by the time a youngster gets out of high school, he has watched more than 20,000 hours of television, witnessed 15,000 murders, and watched 100,000 alcohol-related commercials.** They convey the message that drinking is fun, smoking is glamorous, and drugs are the "in" thing. No wonder the crime rate is so high!

Soap operas glamorize premarital and extramarital sex. No wonder commitments are lacking in relationships and

*From the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families, Annual Report, 1995.

**As mentioned in Jerry Johnson's book *It's Killing Our Kids*, p. xvi.



divorce rates are high. Impressionable viewers set their standards and benchmarks based on what they see and hear in the media. And no matter who it is, we are all impressionable to varying degrees.

5. Profanity

Using profanities show a lack of self-control and discipline.

6. Rock Music

The lyrics of some hit songs are obscene. We can be subconsciously influenced by the music we hear and the performance we watch.

Step 7: Learn to Like the Things That Need to be Done

Some things need to be done whether we like them or not; for example, mothers caring for their young. They may not be fun and games, and may even be painful. But if we learn to like the task, the impossible becomes possible.

Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

—St. Francis of Assisi

Step 8: Start Your Day with a Positive

Read or listen to something positive first thing in the morning. After a good night's sleep we are relaxed and our subconscious is receptive. It sets the tone for the day, and puts us in the right frame of mind to make every day a positive day. In order to bring about change, we

need to make a conscious effort and be committed to make positive thoughts and behavior part of our lives. Practice having positive thoughts and behavior daily until they become a habit.

William James of Harvard University said, "If you are going to change your life, you need to start immediately and do it flamboyantly."

WINNERS VERSUS LOSERS

- The Winner is always part of the answer;
The Loser is always part of the problem.
- The Winner always has a program;
The Loser always has an excuse.
- The Winner says, "Let me do it for you";
The Loser says, "That is not my job."
- The Winner sees an answer for every problem;
The Loser sees a problem for every answer.
- The Winner says, "It may be difficult but it is possible";
The Loser says, "It may be possible but it is too difficult."
- When a Winner makes a mistake, he says, "I was wrong";
When a Loser makes a mistake, he says, "It wasn't my fault."
- A Winner makes commitments;
A Loser makes promises.
- Winners have dreams;
Losers have schemes.
- Winners say, "I must do something";
Losers say, "Something must be done."

- Winners are a part of the team;
Losers are apart from the team.
- Winners see the gain;
Losers see the pain.
- Winners see possibilities;
Losers see problems.
- Winners believe in win/win;
Losers believe for them to win someone has to lose.
- Winners see the potential;
Losers see the past.
- Winners are like a thermostat;
Losers are like thermometers.
- Winners choose what they say;
Losers say what they choose.
- Winners use hard arguments but soft words;
Losers use soft arguments but hard words.
- Winners stand firm on values but compromise on petty things;
Losers stand firm on petty things but compromise on values.
- Winners follow the philosophy of empathy: "Don't do to others what you would not want them to do to you";
Losers follow the philosophy, "Do it to others before they do it to you."
- Winners *make* it happen;
Losers let it happen.
- Winners plan and prepare to win. The key word is *preparation*.

BE A WINNER—ACTION STEPS

Let me close this chapter with the eight action steps discussed earlier:

1. Be a good finder.
2. Make a habit of doing it now.
3. Develop an attitude of gratitude.
4. Get into a continuous education program.
5. Built positive self-esteem.
6. Stay away from negative influences.
7. Learn to like the things that need to be done.
8. Start your day with a positive.